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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2943
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 6744
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 2100
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE 2816
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA IMMEDIATE 0822
RUEHNN/AMCONSUL NAHA IMMEDIATE 3269
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE IMMEDIATE 4356
RUEHKS/AMCONSUL SAPPORO IMMEDIATE 1740
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI IMMEDIATE 6396
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUALSFJ/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA IMMEDIATE
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEATRS/TREASURY DEPT WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 001790

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/22/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: LDP SPLITS UPPER HOUSE BY-ELECTIONS

REF: A. TOKYO 1761

[1](#)B. TOKYO 1537

[1](#)C. FUKUOKA 0022

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer. Reasons: 1.4 (b),(d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. The ruling LDP and opposition DPJ split two by-elections on April 22, reducing the number of seats the ruling coalition needs to win in the Upper House July elections, in order to retain a majority, from 65 to 64. In Okinawa, strong support from the LDP's coalition partner, Komeito, made the difference for LDP candidate Shimajiri, who took the seat formerly held by the opposition. Base issues were not a major focus of the campaign. In Fukushima, a popular three-term DPJ Lower House member was elected to fill a seat previously held by his party. The win in Fukushima is unlikely to give much of a boost to the opposition in the run up to the July Upper House elections, however, since a DPJ victory was widely expected. Hundreds of municipal mayoral and assembly elections were also conducted on April 22, wrapping up the 2007 unified local elections. End Summary.

LDP and DPJ Split Upper House By-Elections

[1](#)2. (C) Ruling coalition and opposition candidates faced off in Okinawa and Fukushima on April 22, in by-elections to fill two vacant seats in the House of Councilors (ref A). In Fukushima, popular three-term Lower House member Teruhiko Mashiko, 59, defeated ruling coalition and Japan Communist Party (JCP) candidates convincingly, to retain for the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) the seat vacated by Yuhei Sato when he ran successfully for governor in November 2006. Mashiko took 541,000 votes, compared to just 303,000 for the ruling coalition candidate. Voter turnout was down four points from 2004, to just under 57 percent.

[1](#)3. (C) In Okinawa, Aiko Shimajiri, 54, backed by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and coalition partner Komeito, took a seat formerly held by the opposition parties in a relatively close race, 255,000 votes to 228,000 for her competitor. Voter turnout was a record low of 47 percent, down seven points from 2004. The win lowers the number of seats the LDP

must win in July to maintain its majority in the Upper House from 65 to 64.

14. (C) According to Consulate General Naha contacts, base issues did not figure prominently in the Okinawa race, and the opposition strategy of highlighting perceived economic disparities with the mainland was largely ineffective. The win should give the ruling parties greater confidence in moving forward on plans to relocate MCAS Futenma. Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma and LDP Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa were quoted in the press on April 23 as optimistic about consultations between the central government and the affected municipalities.

Komeito Decides the Winner

15. (C) Komeito played the deciding role in Shimajiri's victory. According to a Komeito source, the party has between 80,000 and 100,000 voters in Okinawa. Close to 80,000 party supporters turned out to vote, with 94 percent backing Shimajiri and thus determining the winner. If only 70 percent of Komeito voters had supported the LDP, the DPJ would have taken the seat. Prime Minister Abe and other LDP leaders are well aware, and have been reminded, that the LDP needs coalition partner Komeito support to win key races and hold on to their majority.

16. (C) The Okinawa loss hits the DPJ particularly hard, after winning the seat overwhelmingly in 2004. Keiko Itokazu, the winner in the 2004 race, vacated the seat last year in a failed run for governor. She remains popular

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locally, and is expected to run for the other Okinawa Upper House seat in July. While Itokazu was able to win in 2004 by garnering 80 percent of unaffiliated voters, in the April 22 by-election the opposition candidate took only 61 percent of these "floating" votes. Given the record low turnout, this proved insufficient to trump the 94 percent of Komeito voters who backed Shimajiri.

Local Elections: Unaffiliated Candidates Triumph, Amidst
Record Low Turnout

17. (C) Voters also elected hundreds of local mayors and assembly members in the second and final round of the 2007 unified local elections on April 22 (ref B). In eight head-to-head match-ups between ruling and opposition party mayoral candidates, the ruling coalition can claim victory in five, two over the DPJ and three over the JCP. The DPJ scored two victories and the JCP one. An article in the April 23 Mainichi Shimbun noted that the percentage of mayors elected without party affiliation reached a new high of 55 percent this year, reflecting a continuing trend toward higher numbers of unaffiliated candidates.

18. (C) Voters nationwide also set a new record for apathy in the unified local mayoral races, down four points to 53.5 percent. This was true even in Nagasaki (ref C), where the assassination of the incumbent just five days before the election was expected to raise interest. (In the end, Tomihisa Taue, a city official and independent, defeated the murdered mayor's son-in-law, Makoto Yokoo. Both were last-minute entrants.) In Hokkaido's Yubari, where city leaders were forced to declare bankruptcy this year and the issue of regional disparities was hotly debated, turnout was the third lowest on record. A rare exception was Toyo in Kochi Prefecture, where 89 percent of voters turned out to elect a candidate opposing plans to turn the city into a nuclear dumpsite, in a local race that attracted national media attention.

SCHIEFFER